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CLWYD WEB

JULY 2002

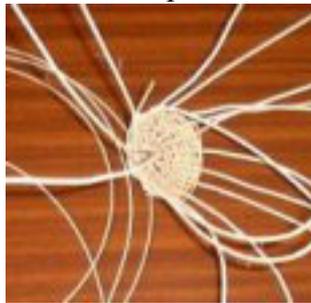
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The Hat!



The Spider



Last Months meeting: Peter Forsyth introduced us to cane weaving, a subtle art shown by the variety of different items produced from the same set of instructions (see left!)

We followed the “basketry” with a show and tell from all the people who had work accepted for exhibition. This not only showed some beautiful pieces but also the real progression of work from both individuals and the guild as a whole over the years since it was started.

September Meeting will be a talk on the Falkland Islands. This speaker has visited before, and gives a good slide show on the culture and wildlife of the Falklands. He also brings along a load of interesting white and coloured merino fleece to sell, along with a variety of goods from the Falkland Islands.

August at Homes.

2nd Aug: The first summer “At Home” is a visit to Llanasa Craft exhibition and an invite to tea with **Joyce Bagnall** (Note that parking at Joyce’s is limited).

19th Aug: After that we have several more kind invitations. The first is from **Barbara Clayton**
28th Aug: next **Teresa Smith** suggests lunch followed by a visit to the Bersham heritage Centre to see the Chameleon textile exhibition.

17th-27th Sept: Finally, **Rosemary Williams** invites anyone who would like to see the Gwynedd Guild’s exhibition (Anglesey), to get in touch and arrange a get together.

Could you contact the host for details of these At Homes, so that they know what sort of numbers to expect. A plate of food to share would also be very welcome.

Country Shows. Another reminder to let June January know if you can help demonstrate at any of the country shows to which we’ve been invited.



This is the back of Myra’s chair, and in the next piece, there is a close-up of some of Helen Melvin’s work, a crochet coat. All this of course, demands colour printing, so you could always try http://www.spindizzy.net/clwyd_web

A personal experience of Colour Congress 2002 by Helen Melvin, textile and felt artist.

If any one had any doubts about whether natural dyes have any role in the modern textile world, then Colour Congress 2002 would have put them to rest. Whether it was the exhibition, which combined traditional techniques with contemporary art, or the superb textiles from around the world in the vendors market there was no doubt that natural dyes are still a potent source of colour worldwide. *Contd...*



The Colour Congress brought together academics, artists, and business people as well as those for whom weaving, spinning and dyeing are a way of life and the papers reflected this range. I went from a talk on ecofriendly mordanting and dyeing of cotton by an organic chemist using ultrasound to extract dyes, to a talk on dyeing with avocados, to the fascinating Japanese technique of dyeing with Safflower. I had a sense of the world being crisscrossed with connections between dyeing enthusiasts; of many different people (and there were thirty nations represented) being linked with a common enthusiasm for dyes from the natural world.

The workshops that I took or heard reports of reflected the same mixture of modern and traditional techniques from immersion dyeing to dyeing with mud and fungi, as well as layering, printing, stencilling and stamping colour with the concentrated natural dyes and the painting with natural dyes on tannin coated papers

There were some complaints. Both the workshops and the papers were reputedly uneven in quality, but my own personal experience was that the good far outweighed the bad and I left a little wiser, with a burning desire to do at least half a dozen experiments at once and an abiding memory of many dyeing friends from around the world.

Helen Melvin.

Eds. Notes *I think we were all grateful to Carol for reminding us of that useful technique “Idaho Plying”. I thought that those of you who missed the June meeting would be interested to learn a bit more about the history of this useful technique. After many hours of research in dusty archives, followed by an in-depth websearch, I think that I have now produced a definitive*

history of this fascinating little trick that can prove so useful to both spinners and chip shops alike.

It appears that the early American settlers, moving Westward on the overland trails packed all they could for the journey, but there were inevitable losses from marauding buffalo, raging torrents and the loss of a suitcase by British Airways. They became gifted in making do with what remained and in adapting innovative ideas from native populations. The settlers who took the more southerly routes encountered the Navaho tribes and though they bartered their bobbins away, still managed to make sturdy 3 ply yarns with local help. However, it wasn't always possible for a spinner to find 3 Native Americans to each hold a ball of handspun and eventually a novel way of daisy chaining the yarn was invented which only required a single Indian – thus was Navaho plying born!

However, many groups of settlers who crossed the empty central plains, encountered more warlike tribes. These peoples refused to stand around holding balls of wool leaving the settler women no choice but to knit desperately unfashionable garments from chunky singles which their husbands refused to wear. Finally, the women put their heads together and took stock of their scanty provisions and the technique of Idaho plying was born.

Since it requires only minimal tools (usually 3 intriguingly shaped



potatoes will do) the trick has spread widely now and is known by most serious spinners. (A variant dating to the 1880s involving courgettes was recently discovered in the archives of a Californian gold rush town).

Finally.... How are the socks going? If you still haven't managed to turn a heel, maybe felt boots would be easier.